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ABSTRACT

Advertising history is often treated within the context of journalism or mass communication history. The outline of a seminar course in advertising history presented in this paper offers an approach that discusses the social, cultural, and philosophical roots of advertising as well as the institution as it is known today. The focus of the course is not on the practice of advertising, but rather the function. The assigned readings for the course include books, chapters of books, and articles. Readings for the course consider: the placement of advertising into historical context; the role of the consumer and the seller; the development of modern advertising; and the integration of the institution of advertising into the culture. (A syllabus, a reading and discussion schedule, and a 48-item reading list are attached.) (RS)

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A Descriptive Outline for an Advertising History Course in Seminar Format

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Abstract

Advertising history is often treated within the context of journalism or mass communication history. This course outline offers an approach that discusses the social, cultural and philosophical roots of advertising and the institution as we have come to know it. The focus is not on the practice of advertising, but rather the function. The outline presented here describes assigned readings with the rationale for the assignment of the reading. A syllibus and a supplementary reading list are included.

Much of the education and discussion of advertising history occurs within the context of journalism or mass communication history, even at the graduate level. This paper offers an approach to advertising history as a separate course. Although advertising is practiced throughout the world, this course restricts itself to advertising in the United States. Even so, most of the readings offered in the reference list cannot be assigned; a semester is not long enough to cover all of them. Those unassigned readings may be reviewed and abstracted by individual students. This paper proposes assigned readings--books, chapters and articles--and rationale for their assignment. This is not appropriate for a straight lecture course. It is meant for a seminar format with a relatively small group of motivated students.

The beginning of a course in advertising should set the context for the development of advertising as practiced, and its cultural and institutional roots. The first assignment would be Carey (1989), who puts forth the contextual framework clearly. The subject much of the debate he presents has a historical orientation that illustrates transformations in the way people think about the world. Basic to that orientation is the position that the past contains the reality of the present and the outlines of the future. The present and the future become more meaningful viewed as part of a continuing process.

The continuing process with which he is concerned is the creation of social institutions, for the purpose of meeting the problems of existence. The broad mechanisms for meeting those problems are tradition, authoritarian control and the market. Advertising is an institution in that it is a humanly designed method of handling certain problems of existence. Initially the institution of advertising was simply to provide information on economic goods and services, but evolved under the impact of modern conditions to include broader, non-economic applications. The reference to non-economic applications will be tied in to at least one of the books to be assigned later.

In the development of his thesis, Carey describes the transition to the market system. The transition is not entirely economic: it depends upon compatibility with prevailing philosophy. From Aristotle to Augustine through Luther, the view of human existence and human nature had to go through major changes in order to be compatible with the development of the market. Science as well as religion went through revolutions that changed the view of man's place in the universe. Those changes not only allowed the market to develop, but also allowed economic laws to develop. Just as natural laws governed the universe, natural laws also governed the market. Men were moral and rational, guided by

an invisible hand. The view of human nature will be tied in to a later reading assignment.

The development of the character of the market brings with it development of communication about market activities. Eventually the market relationships cease to be primarily interpersonal. Therefore, market communication ceases to be interpersonal. But the relationship is still basically between a producer and a consumer. The next assigned reading for the course will focus on the participants in the market transaction.

The first of the readings on the consumer would be Veblen (1967). Although it is not technically an advertising history, it is about consumption. Just as Carey goes back through the millennia to trace the origins of advertising, so does Veblen to trace the origins of consumption. If the market represents a mechanism for the expression of property rights, than the nature of property must be considered. And Veblen puts the earliest form of ownership in the barbarous ownership of women by the able-bodied men of a community. Unfortunately, early appropriation of useful articles is not considered as a form of ownership.

Extending the practice of owning human beings to other captives and inferiors, the able-bodied men then became known for their conspicuous leisure, since they no longer had to work. Further, certain goods were available for consumption

only to those who had the wealth, i.e. women and other slaves, to produce those goods. The conspicuous consumption of those goods gave evidence of one's wealth. But within the household of the owner, forms of vicarious consumption and leisure developed among servants according to function within the household. The butler, for example, no longer participated in productive labor, but neither was he at leisure.

Through the desire to appear to be at leisure, a system of values emerged through which consumers could avoid even the appearance of productivity. Those people of the lower classes sought to emulate the people of the upper classes by conspicuous consumption of what they could afford. And community standards of appearance gradually changed what was the minimum acceptable level of consumption, so that one might need to neglect necessities of survival in order to maintain the minimum community standard of appearance.

Some may consider Veblen's position on the origin of private property to be tenuous. It makes no provision for the appropriation of property through the addition of one's own labor. It assumes a society of warriors or hunters, not farmers or herdsmen. Yet much of his discussion of conspicuous leisure and consumption, and rising community standards has the ring of validity to it. Underlying that discussion is the question of the morality of consumption.

Horowitz (1985) brings the issue of morality to light through a series of budget studies from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. The standards of what constitutes morality in spending expand to include more areas with the passage of time. According to writers to which Horowitz refers, certain expenses are necessities and, therefore, moral. Other expenses are discretionary, yet morally desirable. The rest are frivolous and morally undesirable. Some money must be spent on food, clothing and shelter. They are necessities. Gradually, a certain amount of insurance and then entertainment expenses were recognized as being vital to a healthy life. Money spent on books, theater or concert tickets and other such culturally enriching pursuits was considered acceptable, along with a certain amount spent on alcohol and tobacco. But money spent on self-indulgence or the accumulation of goods for their own sakes was so suspect as to be almost prima facie immorality.

Over the period included in Horowitz' study, the trend was to a greater material standard of living rather than a greater cultural standard. Some saw in every recession or depression the beginnings of a repudiation of materialism that never materialized. Veblen is concerned with a leisure class, Horowitz with the working class. The question of morality raised by both Veblen and Horowitz extends from Carey's discussion of Protestantism as a movement away from

the rigid morality of Augustine, permitting the rise of a merchant class. But Horowitz documents a continuation of that movement toward a materialism that Veblen and other seemed to find so appalling.

At this point, after having an overview of the development of advertising as an institution and the rise of two different classes of consumers with attendant moral considerations, the viewpoint shifts to that of the advertiser. Enter the seller. Although this is a course on American advertising, course materials illustrate the origins of American advertising in other countries. Carey's pre-classical discussion, for example, was not of the United States. Nor was Veblen's origin of private property. The next book assigned is a history of advertising in both England and the United States by Turner (1953). Since advertising is a cultural phenomenon, and since England and the United States have been closely related culturally, it makes sense to follow the development of the institution on both sides of the Atlantic.

Turner gives specific examples of advertisements and advertisers. This is a good look at the character of advertising, putting the professed claims and intentions along side the products and actions of advertisers. Often the examples point out the differences between what the advertisers' expressed standards are and what their actual

standards are. Turner also documents the growth of media in both countries, the growth of advertising in the media, and the relationship between advertisers and media. This can be integrated with discussion from previous readings in that it treats market communication as moving into new media while continuing on old advertising techniques, that is, the past contained the outlines of the future. This book will tie in to other assigned reading because of its discussion of legal questions, professionalism, and ethics. But Turner's position is that the public is partly responsible for raising the standards of advertising.

How responsible is the public? How intelligent is the consumer? These are some of the questions addressed by Preston (1977). Also going back to England, Preston discusses the concept of caveat emptor. And since the readings in this course have already shown that the consumer can be tremendously immoral, readings such as this and the previous one should provide some balance by showing that the advertiser also can be tremendously immoral.

Further, about this time of the semester the students would need some comic relief, and Preston is simply fun to read. But the fun is that some of the claims and counterclaims are so absurd as to be laughable. The chief value of this book is that here is a well documented discussion of the history of advertising regulation. The

professionalism and ethics of industry practitioners do not keep them from stretching the limits of acceptability. If history of advertising had more examples of honest, ethical and professional practice, Preston's book would be a lot shorter. This book must be included in the syllabus because it is the only book to address this issue in depth. Turner only devotes about 30 pages to puffery, and the specific instances take place in England.

After a 300-page book, the students get a break with a 22-page article by Curti. This is a chance to see how advertisers themselves saw their targets. The theme ties in to one brought up by Carey: the nature of man. By studying literature of the advertising trade, Curti identified three periods from the late eighteenth century until the early 1950s in which the views of human nature held by advertisers were distinctly different. Human nature through about 1910 was considered primarily to be rational with the consumer acting in his self interest. Information was better than persuasion or attempts at manipulation; telling was more effective than selling. Also during this period, advertisers began to differentiate appeals according to demographics. Some advertisers took into account the potential influence of emulation, discussed by Veblen, in planning their appeals to lower classes.

From 1910 until about 1930, advertisers saw human nature as predominantly non-rational. The function of advertising was the creation of desire and alternative wants through the use of suggestion, pictures, attention-arresting stimuli, plays on human sympathy and appeals to the senses. Rather than using devices of logos or ethos, advertisers chiefly turned to pathos, using heart-throb devices or stimulating empathy with conditions described in advertisements. Whereas the rational appeal was to get the consumer to do what he didn't want but was convinced that he should through advertising, the non-rational appeal was to get the consumer to want.

From 1930 until the early 1950s, a balanced view of human nature took over. Rather than attempting to create wants, advertisers sought to satisfy existing wants; rather than creating changes, catering to them. Advertiser became more concerned with consumer relations and the general attitudes of society toward business and advertising. Also, advertising began to be used extensively for the "sale" of ideas as well as products and services.

The history of advertising by Pope (1983) fits nicely into the framework created by Curti. Actually Pope's time frame begins sooner, but it ends sooner also. The advertising man as merely a space salesman is not the adman with which Curti is concerned. And Curti is concerned with more than

just advertising agents. But Pope's position is that the entire basis for advertising as it is practiced today was established by about 1920. His discussion, therefore, concerns the changes that the profession was experiencing during a period overlapping Curti's study. One of the changes was the loyalty transfer of the adman from the publication to the advertiser. Another change was one Curti specifically refers to, that of demographic differentiation.

Pope begins to tie together much of the course materials from previous readings. He shows that advertising is necessary for mass distribution and economies of scale, as discussed by Carey. A theme of his book is professionalism in advertising, also a theme of Turner. And he frankly admits that at one time many advertisements were outright lies, obviously of great importance in Preston's work. His period of study, however, ends with 1920.

Another short history looks at advertising from the cultural perspective. Was advertising a reflection of the society in which it thrived? That is one of the questions addressed by Lears (1984), who also brings up the discussion of professionalism in advertising and efforts of advertisers and their agents to be considered professionals. This is not only a history of moral ideology and strategies used in advertising between 1880 and 1930, but also a history of the consolidation of an industry as clubs and associations were

formed. What advertising represented during that period was not a reflection of society as it was, but as it wanted to be, dreamed it could be. Or at least it was a reflection of the dreams of advertisers and their agents about society. Considering Curti's article, the literature said a lot about how advertisers viewed their consumer. Lears details how those views were executed.

In a much more detailed way, Marchand (1985) considers some of the same questions for the years 1920 to 1940. Ridding the profession of the Barnum image, an image that was discussed by Turner, is one of his topics, as is professionalism. But Marchand spends much more time with the consumer than the previous readings except for Horowitz. Further, Marchand does not put the advertiser and the consumer at odds, but combines them into a single social institution--the market--in which each plays an integral part. Advertisers during the depression, for example, were advertising to themselves as much as to the rest of the market. This book is put near the end of the course because Marchand brings together so many factors discussed in the previous readings and uses specific examples to support his points. The previous readings have been largely without illustration. A great strength of this book is that real advertisements from the period are reproduced in the text--not in an appendix--as part of the discussion.

Finally, I would assign a book to address the question of whether the course had meant anything whatsoever, or whether it had been a waste of time and money. Schudson (1984) covers once again the emergence of mass production, consumer culture, and the role of advertising. But his position is that the impact of advertising is perhaps not worth all the excitement it causes, the attention it gets, or the money it costs. And it is at this point that I would want to close the course in the history of advertising in America.

Several books have been written by advertising practitioners that could be included if the reading list and the semester were longer. But the articles and books on the list have included them in their sources. Other articles have placed more emphasis on the cultural nature of advertising. But a fair amount of that also has been included in the readings selected for assignment. The rationale for this list is that since this is to be a history course, the subject itself must be placed into a historical context. Carey is the primary source for context. Next, the role of the consumer should be considered. Veblen and Horowitz are the sources for that. Turner and Preston cover the role of the seller. The development of modern advertising is covered by Pope and Curti. Lears and Marchand address the integration of the institution into the culture. And Schudson is assigned to

stimulate both integration of the prior readings and investigation of further readings.

The most recent assigned reading was published seven years ago. More recent publications are included in the reading list, which is by no means exhaustive. Date of publication was not a criterion for assignment. Rather those readings were assigned that fit the course plan. Still, the plan is flexible enough to include some of the more recent publications.

Course Syllibus

The purpose of this course is to introduce or reacquaint students to historical research and writing illustrating a cultural history of advertising in the United States. The course stresses cultural, social and philosophical aspects of advertising development rather than names, dates, places and events. Many fine works on advertising history are not included in the reading list because they do not fit the organization scheme. However, students may want to consult such works in preparing their final papers.

All students are expected to read all of the assignments and to be prepared to discuss each item. Evidence that students have fulfilled that expectation will in part determine their grades. Each students must also write two three-page book reviews from the unassigned works on the list of suggested readings. The final apaer will be a bibliographic essay of ten or more pages concerning some aspect of the cultural history of advertising. This paper is due on the last day of class. Late papers will be marked down one grade or more.

Students should attempt to read some or all of the recommended readings regardless of whether they are writing reviews on those readings. In addition,, students are invited to bring into discussions relevant material in culture, advertising and history studies.

Reading and Discussion Schedule

Week One: Philosophy and the creation of social institutions.

Carey, J. W. (1989). Advertising: An institutional approach. In R. Hovland & G. B. Wilcox (Eds.), Advertising in society (pp. 11-26). Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Business Books.

Week Two: The origins of consumption.

Veblen, T. (1979). The theory of the leisure class. New York: Penguin Books.

Week Three: The value of leisure, and emulation of others.

Veblen, T. (1979). The theory of the leisure class.

Week Four: Morality in the marketplace.

Horowitz, D. (1985). The Morality of Spending: Attitudes Toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Week Five: Advertising standards, professionalism and ethics.

Turner, E. S. (1953). The shocking history of advertising. New York: E. P. Dutton.

Week Six: Consumers' responsibility and intelligence.

Preston, I. L. (1977). The great American blow-up: Puffery in advertising and selling. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Week Seven: The development of regulation.

Preston, I. L. (1977). The great American blow-up.

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Week Eight: Advertising and human nature.

Curti, M. (1967). The changing concept of "human nature" in the literature of American advertising. Business History Review, 41(4), 335-357.

Week Nine: Advertising as a social institution.

Pope, D. (1983). The making of modern advertising. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Week Ten: Advertising as an economic institution.

Pope, D. (1983). The making of modern advertising.

Week Eleven: The ideology of advertising.

Lears, T. J. J. (1984). Some versions of fantasy: Toward a cultural history of American advertising, 1880-1920. Prospects, 9, 349-405.

Week Twelve: From huckster to professional.

Marchand, R. (1985). Advertising the American dream: Making the way for modernity, 1920-1940. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week Thirteen: Advertisers and consumers as partners.

Marchand, R. (1985). Advertising the American dream: Making the way for modernity, 1920-1940.

Week Fourteen: The big question: What does it all mean?

Schudson, M. (1984). Advertising, the uneasy persuasion: Its dubious impact on American society. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Week Fifteen: The big question continued.

Reading List

Baker, H. C. (1977-78). Patent medicine in Pennsylvania before 1906: A history through advertising. Pennsylvania Folklife, 27(2), 20-33.

Belk, R. W., & Pollay, R. W. (1985). Images of ourselves: The good life in twentieth century advertising. Journal of Consumer Research, 11(4), 887-97.

Bush, G. W. (1991). Lord of attention: Gerald Stanley Lee and the crowd metaphor in industrializing America. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Carey, J. W. (1989). Advertising: An institutional approach. In R. Hovland & G. B. Wilcox (Eds.), Advertising in society (pp. 11-26). Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Business Books.

Clymer, J. F. (1955). Scrapbook of early advertising art. Los Angeles: Clymer.

Curti, M. (1967). The changing concept of "human nature" in the literature of American advertising. Business History Review, 41(4), 335-357.

Dreyfus, C. & Connors, T. (1985). Oral history and American advertising: How the "Pepsi Generation" came alive. International Journal of Oral History, 6(3), 191-197.

Ernster, V. L. (1985). Mixed messages for women: A social history of cigarette smoking and advertising. New York State Journal of Medicine, 85(7), 335-340.

Fox, S. R. (1984). The mirror makers: A history of American advertising and its creators. New York: Morrow.

Goodrum, C. A. (1990). Advertising in America: The first 200 years. New york: Abrams.

Hornung, C. P. & Johnson, F. (1976). 200 years of American graphic art: A retrospective survey of the printing arts and advertising since the colonial period. New York: G. Braziller.

Horowitz, D. (1985). The Morality of Spending: Attitudes Toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Hovland, R. & Wilcox, G. B. (1989). Advertising in society. Lincolnwood, Illinois: NTC Business Books, .

Jones, E. R. (Ed.). (1959). Those were the good old days: A happy look at American advertising, 1880-1930. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Hopkins, C. (1926). Scientific Advertising. New York: Codex.

Jones, E. R. (1959). Those were the good old days: A happy look at American advertising. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Kuna, D. P. (1976). The concept of suggestion in the early history of advertising psychology. Journal of the History of Behavioral Science, 12(4), 347-353.

Lears, T. J. J. (1984). Some versions of fantasy: Toward a cultural history of American advertising, 1880-1920. Prospects, 9, 349-405.

McMahon, A. M. (1972). An American Courtship: Psychologists and advertising theory in the progressive era. American Studies, 13, 5-18.

Marchand, R. (1985). Advertising the American dream: Making the way for modernity, 1920-1940. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Margolin, V. (1979). The promise and the product: 200 years of American advertising posters. New York: Macmillan.

Mayer, M. (1958). Madison Avenue, U. S. A. New York: Harper & Row.

Miracle, G. E. & Nevett, T. (1988). A comparative history of advertising self-regulation in the UK and the United States. European Journal of Marketing, 22(4), 7-23.

Norris, J. D. (1990). Advertising and the transformation of American society, 1865-1920. New York: Greenwood Press.

Olney, M. L. (1991). Buy now, pay later: Advertising, Credit, and consumer durables in the 1920s. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Pease, O. (1958). The responsibilities of American advertising: Private control and public influence, 1920-1940. New Haven: Yale Univeristy Press.

Pollay, R. W. (1985). The subsiding sizzle: A descriptive history of print advertising, 1900-1980. Journal of Marketing, 49, 24-37.

Pollay, R. W. (1979). Information sources in advertising history. Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Pollay, R. W. (1978). Wanted--History of advertising. Journal of Advertising Research, 18(5), 63-68.

Pope, D. (1983). The making of modern advertising. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Presbrey, F. (1929). History and development of advertising. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Preston, I. L. (1977). The great American blow-up: Puffery in advertising and selling. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Qualter, T. H. (1991). Advertising and democracy in the mass age. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Rowsome, F. They laughed when I sat down to play: An informal history of advertising in words and pictures. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Sampson, H. (1875). A history of advertising from the earliest times. London: Chatto and Windus.

Schudson, M. (1984). Advertising, the uneasy persuasion: Its dubious impact on American society. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Seldin, J. (1963). The golden fleece: Selling the good life to Americans. New York: Macmillan.

Staudenmaier, J. & Laird, P. W. L. (1989). Advertising history. Technology and Culture, 30(4), 1031-1036.

Strasser, S. (1989). Satisfaction guaranteed: The making of the American mass market. New York: Pantheon Books.

Susman, W. I. (1984). Culture as history: The transformation of American society in the twentieth century. New York: Pantheon Books.

Trupiano, T. L. (1985). Chief stock in trade: A history of advertsing methods of Marshall medicine manufacturers before federal regulation. Chronicle: The Quarterly Magazine of the Historical Society of Michigan, 21(4), 8-12.

Turner, E. S. (1953). The shocking history of advertising. New York: E. P. Dutton.

Veblen, T. (1979). The theory of the leisure class. New York: Penguin Books.

Watkins, J. L. (1949). The 100 greatest advertisements: Who wrote them and what they did. New York: Moore.

Watkins, T. H. (1972). The boom of the sunset land, southern California, 1887. American West, 9(6), 10-19.

Wolf, M. (1981). Smoke Scenes: Tobacco and art as a fine blend. Westways, 73(8), 30-33.

Wood, J. P. (1958). The story of advertising. New York: Donald Press Co.